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May 28, 1962

My dear Ian:

I dislike bothering the Foreign Office with personal concerns, but I am informed that the proper channel through which my present inquiry should flow is the Foreign Secretary.

I shall attempt to be brief. The American Embassy residence in Regents Park is located on a property of about twelve acres, subject to a long Crown lease. A small portion of it is occupied by the house and outbuildings. The remainder is, for the most part, greensward, though there are some trees, clumps of shrubs, and other not wholly successful products of unsophisticated landscape gardening.

Just beyond the limits of our lawn, lying within the public stretch of Regents Park, is a small pond. It is densely populated with aquatic birds, including swans, geese, brent, and ducks.

The most numerous of the last species is the mallard. These birds seem to think that they also have a 99-year lease on the premises, for when their companions of other breeds fly north, on summer holidays, they remain in vacuous leisure here.

It is only during two springs that I have had the opportunity to observe the habits of these mallards. I find them quite extraordinary. Last year, their customs were normal. The ducks laid their eggs in thick cover, lead vases, roof drains and elsewhere.

This year,(perhaps it is due to the peculiarity of the weather to date) their attitude toward procreation and rearing their young has undergone a radical change.

/The ducks

Ian Samuel, Esquire,
Private Secretary to the
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Foreign Office.

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